

## CHAPTER 7: HAVE WE DONE IT RIGHT? HOW GOOD IS OUR EVALUATION?

*"A standard is a principle mutually agreed to by people engaged in a professional practice, that, if met, will enhance the quality and fairness of that professional practice."*

Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation

Now that you have gone through the CENTERED Evaluation Guide and, have been successful in planning an evaluation for your program, you might wonder what the criteria are for determining the quality of that evaluation. Standards have been developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and endorsed by the American Evaluation Association and other professional organizations.

As a quick review, the basic steps of the program evaluation process should already be part of a CBOs routine work. For success, both the evaluator and the CBO need to:

- Meet regularly with the community partners and other program stakeholders;
- Define with the community partners and other stakeholders the program's goals;
- Assess whether the program's activities are helping to achieve those goals;
- Ask questions that help in good decision-making relative to use of resources;
- Collect, analyze, and interpret program data;
- Assess program success based on expectations and program performance; and,
- Share managerial decisions, and the rationale that led to them, with the CBO's governing board, community partners, and with other key stakeholders.

If these steps are being taken by your CBO, then "informal" evaluation is already a routine part of your managerial process. Evaluation standards against which to compare what you are already doing (or plan to do) in evaluating your program will help you to decide if the evaluation is well-designed for optimizing the likelihood that your program will be successful. Compliance with the standards will assist in assuring that the evaluation process is sound, fair, and practical.

The following are thirty standards recommended by the Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation that have been adapted for application to community-based public health programs. Compare your evaluation plan with these standards and then refine your evaluation plan as needed to assure that:

- It meets your needs;
- Is "doable";
- Is both legal and ethical; and,
- Is capable of producing the accurate and credible results your stakeholders need.

# EVALUATION STANDARDS CHECKLIST

(Based upon recommendations from the Joint Committee on Educational Evaluation)

**UTILITY STANDARDS:** To ensure that the evaluation meets stakeholder needs.

- ☐ Stakeholder Identification: So their needs can be assessed and addressed.
- ☐ Evaluator Credibility: To assure the trustworthiness and competence needed to achieve maximum credibility and acceptance of the evaluation findings.
- ☐ Information Scope and Selection: Selected to develop the set of information needed to answer the questions about the program as posed by the stakeholders.
- ☐ Values Identification: A careful description of the perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the evaluation findings.
- ☐ Report Clarity: The evaluation report should clearly describe the program evaluated, including its context, and the purposes, procedures, and findings.
- ☐ Report Timeliness and Dissemination: Significant findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users in a timely fashion.
- ☐ Evaluation Impact: Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage stakeholders to use or otherwise act upon the findings.

**FEASIBILITY STANDARDS:** To ensure that the evaluation is realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.

- ☐ Practical Procedures: Program disruptions are minimized while information needed to do a credible evaluation is obtained.
- ☐ Political Viability: The evaluation values the different perspectives of diverse interest groups, enables their participation and seeks their cooperation, and strives to avert efforts to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the findings.
- ☐ Cost Effectiveness: The evaluation must be efficiently conducted and produce the information requested by stakeholders about the programs performance/success.

**PROPRIETY STANDARDS:** To ensure that the evaluation is conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in or affected by the results.

- ☐ Service Orientation: The evaluation addresses and effectively serves the needs of the full range of targeted participants and stakeholders.
- ☐ Formal Agreements: Agreement in writing of the obligations of all formal parties involved in the evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, and by when).
- ☐ Rights of Human Subjects: The evaluation is designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.

- ❑ Human Interactions: Evaluators (and program staff) are expected to respect human dignity and worth in all interactions with others associated with the evaluation, so participants are not threatened or harmed by the evaluation process.
- ❑ Complete and Fair Assessment: The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of program strengths and weaknesses, so program strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.
- ❑ Disclosure of Findings: The full set of evaluation findings and pertinent limitations are made accessible to those affected by the evaluation, and to others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.
- ❑ Conflict of Interest: Conflict of interest is dealt with openly and honestly.
- ❑ Fiscal Responsibility: The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources reflect sound accountability procedures and is prudent and ethically responsible.

**ACCURACY STANDARDS:** To ensure that the evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about those features that determine program merit.

- ❑ Program Documentation: The program is described and documented clearly and accurately.
- ❑ Context Analysis: The context in which the program exists is examined in enough detail, so that its likely influences on the program can be identified.
- ❑ Described Purposes and Procedures: The evaluation purposes and procedures are monitored and described in enough detail, so they can be identified and assessed.
- ❑ Defensible Information Sources: The sources of information used in the evaluation are described so the adequacy of the information can be assessed.
- ❑ Valid Information: The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so they will assure that the interpretation arrived at is valid for the intended use.
- ❑ Reliable Information: The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.
- ❑ Systematic Information: The information collected, processed, and reported is systematically reviewed and any errors found corrected.
- ❑ Analysis of Quantitative Information: Quantitative information is appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.
- ❑ Analysis of Qualitative Information: Qualitative information is appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.
- ❑ Justified Conclusions: The conclusions reached are explicitly justified, so stakeholders can assess them.
- ❑ Impartial Reporting: Reporting procedures guard against distortion caused by biases of any party to the evaluation, so that the report fairly reflects evaluation findings.
- ❑ Meta-evaluation: The evaluation itself should be evaluated against these and other pertinent standards, so that its conduct is appropriately guided and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.